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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 DAKAR 002011

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF, S/CT, AF/PDPA, AF/W, AF/RSA, AND DRL/IRF
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR COURVILLE
AID/W FOR AFR AND AFR/WA
IBB FOR VOA
EUCOM FOR COL. JOHN METZ
ACCRA ALSO FOR IBB/VOA AND USAID/WA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [SENV](#) [SOCI](#) [KPAO](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: PROMINENT SENEGALESE MUSLIM LEADER REQUESTS USG
SUPPORT FOR FM RADIO PROPOSAL

11. (U) This is an action request; please see para 11
below.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Post has received a USD 1.3 million
request for financial support from prominent Senegalese
Islamic leader Cheikh Hassan Cisse, to expand the
broadcast capability of his community radio station,
Medina Baye FM, affiliate with Voice of America, and focus
on development and socioeconomic issues. Cisse heads the
non-profit African-American Islamic Institute (AII),
which has an extensive record of activity in human rights,
education, health, and poverty reduction. While
ambitious, his proposal holds considerable promise in
terms of countering Wahabist/Salafist influences in the
region and mitigating conditions that can give rise to
extremist views. Post recommends USG funding support for
this proposal. END SUMMARY.

CISSE AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ISLAMIC INSTITUTE

13. (U) The Chief Imam of the Grand Mosque in the regional
capital of Kaolack, Cheikh Hassan Cisse, is a prominent
leader in the Tidiane brotherhood, the largest of
Senegal's four principal Sunni (Sufi) communities. With
academic degrees earned in Cairo and London and doctoral
work at Northwestern University in the U.S., Cisse travels
frequently throughout West Africa as a spiritual leader
and assistance donor. He is also an influential and
widely respected voice for religious moderation and
tolerance. For example, Nigeria's political leaders
recently invited him to participate in talks in Abuja
aimed at reducing tensions between Christian and Muslim
communities in northern Nigeria.

14. (U) Founded by Cisse in 1988 and registered as a non-
profit NGO in 1998, the African-American Islamic Institute
(AII) seeks "to develop a capability for sustainable
human and natural resource development that focuses on
human rights, education, health care, food and water
availability, alleviation of poverty and the promotion of
peace." AII has an extensive record of activity in many
areas of human development, from digging wells and
supporting orphanages to campaigning against female
genital mutilation and drug abuse. Based in Kaolack,
Senegal's third-largest city, AII boasts affiliate
organizations in ten African countries and several cities

in the United States. It has a documented history of grants management and cooperation with donor assistance organizations and United Nations bodies, notably UNICEF and UNFPA.

MEDINA BAYE FM'S CURRENT STATUS

¶5. (U) Since 2004, Medina Baye FM (90.1) has broadcast at the 30w level on an intermittent basis as a community radio station in Kaolack with a range of 30 kilometers (estimated potential audience: 275,000). The station's manager, Moustapha Sane, works part time for the station and is the Director of Studies at the British-Senegalese Institute in Dakar. Medina Baye FM also employs a consultant, Ousmane Djiba, who works for the local firm Radio TeleAfrica Technology and serves as VOA technical advisor to one of Senegal's leading Dakar-based stations, "Top FM."

CISSE'S EXPANSION PLAN: NO MODEST PROPOSAL

¶6. (SBU) On July 14, post received a cover letter and 30-page, itemized budget request of USD 1.3 million detailing the initial capital investment and overhead costs needed to transform Medina Baye FM into a nationwide commercial radio station during a three-year period of expansion. After consulting with Cisse and his representatives, post received a detailed prospectus with budget items broken down by year, outlining an "evolutionary" process toward Cisse's desired end-state.

¶7. (SBU) During the first year, Cisse proposes the expansion of Medina Baye FM's reach to 200 kilometers, which would increase its potential audience to more than

DAKAR 00002011 002 OF 003

500,000 listeners. Top-line first-year budget items include a technical platform (transmitter) - USD 470,000; physical plant (construction) - USD 130,000; technical facilities (studios and offices) - USD 130,000; and personnel (journalists, producer/editor, technicians, administrative) - USD 135,000. (NOTE: As a first step towards expanding its operations, Medina Baye FM obtained in July a commercial radio license authorizing broadcasts at 2kW. END NOTE.)

¶8. (SBU) Cisse also seeks to establish a partnership with Voice of America (VOA), which in accordance with the budget would entail the purchase of a decoder/receiver (USD 20,000), as well as a publicity campaign to launch the service (USD 72,000).

¶9. (SBU) In years two and three, Cisse seeks to expand Medina Baye FM's reach with a network of relay stations that will cover all of Senegal and even reach into neighboring countries. In addition, he plans to offer Internet-based broadcasts through AAIL's website, www.aail.info.

CISSE'S FORMAT: COMMERCIAL RADIO WITH A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

¶10. (SBU) Cisse proposes a 24-hour a day/7-day a week program format focusing on girls' education; environmental protection/management; health issues, including maternal/neonatal care and HIV/AIDS prevention; economic development; and civic education. (NOTE: One of Dakar's most popular community radio stations, Radio Oxyjeunes, follows a format similar to Cisse's proposal and has enjoyed considerable success in heightening awareness of health and women's issues. END NOTE.) In addition to some religious programming, the proposed format also includes the traditional elements of news, sports, music and cultural segments, to be aired in French as well as the national languages of Wolof, Pulaar, and Serer.

MEDINA BAYE FM: DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH?

¶11. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Cisse's proposal is fully consistent with the aims of the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI). Post believes this request for USD 1.3 million to expand broadcast capability and programming by Medina Baye FM merits USG support. As a moderate Muslim figure whose leadership holds sway in not just Senegal, but the region as a whole, Cisse and AAIL have the institutional track record and bona fides to merit serious consideration for USG funding. END ACTION REQUEST.

¶12. (SBU) COMMENT: With the reach and efficiency of a commercial station, Medina Baye FM's expanded programming would direct a secular focus on many of the socioeconomic conditions considered to be among the root causes of extremist views. Cisse's proposal would create a media outlet clearly inclined to collaborate with post in advancing health, education and human rights priorities among youth and under-served populations outside of Dakar. Under Cisse's leadership, Medina Baye FM's proposed expansion also stands to contribute significantly to the propagation of a moderate Muslim perspective in Senegal and even neighboring countries. Though Senegalese are generally resistant to religious extremism and Islamic fundamentalism, Medina Baye FM's presence could help to challenge radical Wahabist and Salafist messages and deflect inroads in Senegal, which is 95 percent Muslim. The proposed expansion of Medina Baye FM would also be a useful addition to Senegal's media landscape in the run-up to Dakar's hosting of the Organization of the Islamic Conferences (OIC) Summit, slated for early 2008.

¶13. (SBU) If full or partial funding is obtained from a single source, post recommends the Department of State serve as the implementing agency, with post's Public Affairs Officer assuming primary responsibility for monitoring the grant. If mixed USG funding sources are used, post has a standing Interagency Media Advisory Group (a committee consisting of section/agency heads) that

DAKAR 00002011 003 OF 003

could serve as the coordinating body. While post's budget cannot accommodate Cisse's start-up costs, post is prepared to support Medina Baye FM through U.S. Speaker Programs, Information Resource Center assistance and other public diplomacy tools used to support independent media and conduct Muslim outreach. END COMMENT.

JACOBS